

**JUNE 7, 2023**  
**SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING**

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Special Budget Meeting this evening at 7:00 p.m. in the Education Centre Boardroom, with the following members in attendance: J. Weston (Chairperson), B. Cody, C. Johnson, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein, M. Ramsay, M. Waseem, C. Watson and K. Woodcock.

Student Trustees V. Raina and K. Soror were not in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: j. chanicka (Director of Education and Secretary), D. Ahluwalia, R. Dallan, E. Dougan-McKenzie, N. Landry, S. Miller and G. Shantz.

Other staff in attendance: C. Gingrich Regehr, L. Lima, M. Mayer and S. Reidel.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson J. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

1. Moved by C. Johnson, seconded by M. Radlein:

**That the agenda of the, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved.**

-Carried-

**DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

**DELEGATIONS**

There were no delegations.

**REPORTS**

Associate Director G. Shantz introduced the series of budget related reports meant to prepare the trustees for the upcoming budget recommendation.

**ENERGY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS UPDATE**

This report was provided for information.

C. Gingrich Regehr, Supervisor of Energy Conservation, and L. Lima, Manager of Mechanical, Electrical and Environmental Services, provided trustees with the energy consumption year-over-year comparison sharing the WRDSB has reduced its Energy Use Intensity (EUI) by

16.1% since 2008. It was shared that 2021/22 saw an increase of 4.6% over the previous year in EUI and that the 2022/23 target, set in the mandated plan, will not be met. Recent increases are largely due to mandated COVID-19 ventilation measures. Trustees were provided with the total Greenhouse Gas Emission (GHG) Intensity for all schools. Since 2008, the WRDSB has reduced its GHG Intensity by 31%. In 2021/22 the WRDSB saw an increase of 9.4% over the previous year due to the increase in energy consumption. They reviewed the budget implications of the increased energy expenses, also noting that natural gas costs are expected to rise rapidly over the next decade. The energy conservation program was reviewed along with information on the installation of real-time monitoring hardware. Trustees were also provided with information on mandatory reporting.

Trustees asked questions regarding using EUI as the metric for measuring, targeting schools with high energy usage, the real time monitoring project and multi-zone units.

### **2023-2024 PUPIL ACCOMMODATION GRANT – SCHOOL RENEWAL ALLOCATION**

The School Renewal Allocation is provided by the Ministry of Education to address the cost of repairing and renovating schools and infrastructure. This funding has typically allowed major maintenance programs such as roof replacements, mechanical upgrades and school renovations to be completed. Renovations have included program improvements such as those made to science, libraries, special education, athletic facility upgrades and administrative areas. Business Services establishes the spending priorities for major maintenance programs through condition assessments performed by Facility Services staff and/or outside consultants. These items are placed in the long-range capital forecast and are scheduled as funding permits. Renovations for program purposes that have been requested by schools are prioritized through consultation with the Elementary Accommodation Committee (EAC) and the Secondary Accommodation Committee (SAC). Major maintenance and program improvements proposed in this budget have been prioritized with the intent to bring older schools up to current standards (e.g. accessibility, HVAC, program). R. Dallan, Manager of Capital Projects, shared that after the upcoming ventilation work in the summer is completed, only 35 instructional classrooms in the system will be without mechanical ventilation. HEPA filters will be running in Full-Day Kindergarten classrooms, ACE classrooms, portables, and other classrooms without mechanical ventilation.

Trustees asked questions of clarification regarding which classrooms will be running HEPA filters and communications regarding HEPA filters. Associate Director G. Shantz asked that families with specific concerns reach out to their classroom teacher, then principal and superintendent if needed.

2. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Radlein:

**That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the 2023-2024 Pupil Accommodation Grant expenditures for the year September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024, not to exceed the level of grant received from the Ministry of Education for School Renewal Allocation, as established in the budget of the report entitled, 2023-2024 Pupil Accommodation Grant – School Renewal Allocation, dated June 7, 2023.**

-Carried-

### **2023-2024 SCHOOL CONDITION IMPROVEMENT GRANT**

This report was provided for information.

Each year, several projects for major maintenance are prioritized and funded from the annual Pupil Accommodation Grant – School Renewal but not all prioritized projects can be completed due to the limited amount of funding available. This additional School Condition Improvement (SCI) Grant will allow for the completion of backlogged prioritized projects in the 2023-2024 school year. The intent of these prioritized projects is to bring older schools up to current standards.

Trustees asked questions regarding capital funding for accessibility and suggested that the Chairperson ask about funding to meet accessibility standards at the next teleconference with the Ministry of Education. Trustees asked questions about the funding allocation and ventilation.

### **MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS QUARTERLY UPDATE**

This report was provided for information.

Current capital projects with budgets greater than \$2.5M were outlined indicating the project status relative to the schedule, budget and scope. Significant milestones, along with basic project statistics, were also presented. During the design phase of each project, in consultation with architects, we continue to see construction cost escalations for the majority of our projects. These cost estimates exceed benchmark funding provided by the Ministry of Education. Once we reach 80 percent design for each project, we will finalize third-party Cost Consultant Reports and submit an approval to proceed (ATP) to the Ministry. Staff will tender the project once the Ministry of Education approves the additional funding allocations. The cost escalations are attributable to global commodity price increases for fuel and construction materials used to build schools. Updates on each project were provided.

Trustees asked questions about costs for new builds, childcare and communication at the South East Cambridge Joint Use Campus. Staff will send trustees an email showing the exact location of the South East Cambridge Joint use Campus.

The Chairperson called a 5-minute recess and returned the meeting to order at 8:15 p.m.

### **2023-2024 GSN OVERVIEW**

Superintendent N. Landry started the overview by thanking Business Services staff for their hard work, particularly Wenqi Zhou, Manager of Budget, and Sharon Uttley, Manager of Accounting. He shared the 2022-23 Interim Financial Report for the third quarter forecasting an in-year deficit of \$6.89M, or 0.92% of operating revenues. There have been increases in Priorities and Partnerships Funding revenues in Q3 (\$5.25M) related to ETFO remedy payments (\$4.8M),

**JUNE 7, 2023**  
**SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING**

Digital Math Tools (\$475K) and New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) (\$13K). The WRDSB anticipates a budget pressure of \$1.6M in short-term supply costs and approximately \$600K for utilities. There has also been an increase in non-operating expenses related to ETFO remedy payments made in May 2023, as well as other one-time charges.

Superintendent N. Landry reviewed budget communications from the Ministry of Education (Ministry) sharing that the Ministry has communicated that its focus for the 2023-24 school year includes the following:

- Early Literacy
- Math
- De-streaming
- Job-readiness
- Mental Health (Supporting student mental health, well-being and resilience)
- Human Rights and Inclusion

He reviewed the Grants for Students Needs (GSN) enrolment inputs that determine the overall allocation to the Board and the grant allocations including funding for classroom, schools, local management and education priorities. He reviewed the key changes to the GSN for the 2023-2024 school year. Superintendent N. Landry provided trustees with further information on changes to the student transportation funding model and the issues resulting in a shortfall of over \$2.9M. He reviewed the reduction in funding to address the out-year financial implications of the extraordinary and temporary decline in recent immigrant enrolment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He reviewed the discontinuation of the COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund in 2023-24 which supported the 81 full-time (temporary) positions in 2022-23. He reviewed the School Operations funding allocation changes and the operational plan for mechanical ventilation and HEPA units for the 782 rooms across the system to meet the necessary criteria. He also referred to the budgeted capital funding. Superintendent N. Landry reviewed the variance in the Priorities and Partnerships Funding for next year compared to the current year.

Trustees asked questions regarding the new transportation funding model and suggested that the Chairperson ask about it at the next teleconference with the Ministry of Education.

Superintendent N. Landry provided background information on in-year deficit management and Reg 280/19 passed in 2019 restricting a board's ability to incur successive in-year deficits. The 2024-25 budget, one year from now, will not be compliant under existing regulations if the budget is not balanced to \$0; no use of reserves will be permitted. Minister's approval will be required for any in-year deficit regardless of the deficit amount. Superintendent N. Landry outlined the connection between the Strategic Plan and the budgeting process as the budget "operationalizes" the Strategic Plan by allocating resources to support the goals. The timelines and next steps of the budget process were reviewed. The presentation concluded with a summary of challenges and risks associated with the 2023-2024 budget.

Trustees asked clarifying questions regarding the deficit and concerns that pandemic years should be exempt from Reg 280/19. This sentiment is shared by many boards and Directors of Education across Ontario.

**ADJOURNMENT**

3. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by C. Johnson:

**That the Special Budget Meeting of June 7, 2023, be adjourned.**

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.